



CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the Heritage Preservation Commission

HPC Agenda Item #2

October 21, 2014

BZH-28377

HERITAGE PRESERVATION APPLICATION SUMMARY

Property Location: 2418 Washington Avenue North
Project Name: North Side Station
Prepared By: Alex Young, CPED Intern with John Smoley Ph.D., Senior Planner, (612) 673-2830
Applicant: Constance Vork, Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Project Contact: Alex Young
Ward: 5
Neighborhood: Near Northside
Request: Nomination for Designation as a Local Landmark

HISTORIC PROPERTY INFORMATION

Current Name	Classic Space
Historic Name	North Side Station
Historic Address	2418 Washington Avenue North
Original Construction Date	1914
Original Owner	Minneapolis Street Railway Company
Original Architect	W.J. Smith
Original Builder	Day Labor
Historic Use	Train Barn
Current Use	Multi-tenant, wholesale, warehouse, fabrication
Proposed Use	Multi-tenant, wholesale, warehouse, fabrication
Other Historical Designations	n/a

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The North Side Station is the last surviving carhouse of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company in the City of Minneapolis. In July of 2013, Stark Preservation Planning LLC prepared a report for the City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office entitled “*Historic Resources Inventory Capstone*”. The building was recommended for potential designation.¹ The building appears to remain intact with good integrity. The owner has not responded to repeated attempts by CPED staff to discuss the nomination.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Staff has received no public comments.

ANALYSIS

CONSIDERATION FOR NOMINATION

Per section 599.230 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations, the Heritage Preservation Commission shall review all complete nomination applications. If the Heritage Preservation Commission determines that a nominated property or property appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210 the commission may institute interim protection and direct the planning director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study of the property.

SIGNIFICANCE

The nominated property appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210:

(1) The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.

Due to its associations with Minneapolis’ streetcar heritage, the North Side Station appears to meet criterion 1, “the property is associated with significant events or periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.” Its primary significance is due to its relationship to the Minneapolis streetcar system and its influence on the built environment of Minneapolis.

¹ Stark Preservation Planning LLC, “*Historic Resources Inventory Capstone*” Prepared for the City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office. 2013, 56, 119, 161, 229.

The Twin City Rapid Transit Company (TCRT) was a privately operated public transportation company whose geographic breadth and economic impacts were enormous. Its 523 miles of track spanned the distance from Lake Minnetonka to the St. Croix River. At its heyday in the 1920s more than 200 million passengers traveled in over 900 company streetcars each year. With roughly 3,500 employees, TCRT also became one of the area's largest employers.²

The Twin Cities street railway system stood apart from other streetcar systems in American cities. Even the systems in larger cities such as Chicago or New York did not meet the threshold of excellence set by the TCRT. The streetcars themselves were a source of local pride because of the quality of their construction and the continual improvement of their design. The public was attracted to the streetcars because so many people rode them, and they were immaculately maintained. The cars were so envied that some were built for the streetcar systems of other cities. The work in these shops was of such great quality that streetcars built in 1906 were still in operation on the last day of service in 1954.³

The streetcar enhanced land and property values; neighborhood commercial nodes developed where streetcar lines would stop or intersect with other lines. Streetcars made it possible for workers to live further away from their places of work than they were previously able to. This change greatly influenced the patterns of growth that define the present boundary of the city. Additionally, the streetcar made it both convenient and affordable for city dwellers to travel to city parks and nearby resort areas.⁴ Since the inception of cities, the distance one could cover on foot or on horseback limited the reach of a city. The streetcar created a new time/space relationship to the geography of the city. Importantly, it offered an efficient, affordable, and viable means of modern transportation for the majority of the city's inhabitants.⁵ It greatly contributed to the enjoyment of these amenities that give The "City of Lakes" its unique character.

At the end of the horsecar era, four of the eleven original horsecar barns in Minneapolis were converted to carhouses as TCRT began the conversion to electric cars in 1891. Additionally, the Nicollet Avenue carhouse was updated for use as a repair shop in the same year.⁶ The remaining facilities were closed and sold, or were used for storage. As a result, three new carhouses were built for the new electric streetcars in 1891: Bloomington Station on Bloomington Avenue and 32nd Street,

² John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 3-5.

³ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 62.

⁴ Thomas R. Zahn & Associates, *Preservation Plan for the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission. Sub-Context: Street Railways, 1873-1954*. 1991, Community Planning and Economic Development Department, University of Minnesota, 1, 3.

⁵ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 3, 4.

⁶ Amy M. Lucas, "Determination of Eligibility Study: East Side Station, Minneapolis Street Railway Company, 315 First Avenue N.E., Minneapolis, MN 2013, 14.

East Minneapolis Station (East Side Station) on 1st Avenue Northeast between University Avenue and 4th Street Northeast, and Midway Station on University Avenue, east of Raymond Avenue in St. Paul. The TCRT expanded the scope of its services from 1904-1914. During this time of growth, the system was outrunning its ability to maintain itself. In 1904 TCRT built the Snelling Complex on forty-acres between University and St. Anthony Avenues in St. Paul. The company turned to expanding and modernizing its carhouses once the Snelling shops opened. In 1910, Lake Street Station was built between 21st and 22nd Avenues South, replacing Bloomington Station, to relieve overcrowding from the inter-city Selby-Lake line due to the rapid growth of neighborhoods east of Chicago Avenue. The old 31st Street carhouse and repair shop was demolished in 1911 followed by the immediate construction of Nicollet Station in 1912.⁷

The TCRT's last carhouse, North Side Station, opened in 1914. Situated in the city block bounded by Washington Avenue and 2nd Street North and 25th and 26th Avenues, North Side was built to relieve the overcrowding at the Lake Street Station. It featured a two-story wing that fronted on Washington Avenue.⁸ The first floor provided separate offices for the foreman and clerk, locker rooms for the trainmen, as well as a storage room and paint shop. The second floor appears to have functioned as a 'men's club' of sorts; the facility provided a pool room, reading room, and sleeping rooms for use by employees.⁹ Behind this was the one-story, car repair shop. Outside, there were thirteen storage tracks to accommodate as many as 148 cars assigned to the Chicago-Penn and Chicago-Fremont, Broadway, 28th Avenue South-Robbinsdale, and the 34th Avenue South-North Bryant lines.¹⁰

Nicollet Station was converted to a bus garage in 1953 which was demolished in the 1980s to make way for a new bus garage. In 1954 Lake Street Station was closed and razed. Parts of the Snelling Shop complex were converted to a bus garage in 1954, that garage was finally demolished in 2002.¹¹ East Side Station was demolished in April of 2014. In a *Determination of Eligibility Study* for East Side Station, the preparer cited North Side Station as a better existing example of surviving TCRT streetcar

⁷ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 62, 64-65, 69-70.

⁸ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 72, 73.

⁹ 1912- December 1951, vol. 1, 1912-April 1951, sheet 24, Sanborn Map, source: Hennepin County Library

¹⁰ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 72, 73.

¹¹ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 73.

infrastructure.¹² This reference to North Side Station was used in part to justify the demolition of East Side Station at 315 1st Avenue Northeast.

In 1953 North Side Station was converted to a bus garage and was subsequently sold and redeveloped for other uses.¹³ Of all the shop facilities that the TCRT built, the North Side Station is the last remnant.

The subject property is associated with the Minneapolis Street Railway Company and the Saint Paul Street railway company which merged into the Twin City Rapid Transit Company in 1891 and appears to be significant under criterion 2, “the property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.” Twin City Rapid Transit (TCRT) was an exceptional company in its own time, and in comparison to the present. Its board of directors and management were community leaders and philanthropists and included recognizable names such as Pillsbury, Washburn, and Goodrich. Its first president, Thomas Lowry, was instrumental in developing many of the neighborhoods in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the surrounding communities.¹⁴

Thomas Lowry was twenty-four years of age upon his arrival in Minneapolis in 1867. As a youth, he accompanied his father, Sam, to Abraham Lincoln’s Springfield law office, and became a great admirer of the man who would become the 16th President. Lowry was trained as a lawyer in Illinois; he spent his first eight years in Minneapolis buying and selling real estate and building his law practice, adding influential clients as his business ventures grew. In 1873 Lowry was part of a group that organized the Minneapolis Street Railway Company. The Minneapolis City Council gave the company an exclusive charter to construct two lines built to the standards of that era. At this time, Minneapolis was but a frontier town. In the fourteen years before Lowry converted the system to electricity in 1889, track mileage grew over 3000% from 2.1 to 66 miles.¹⁵

In order to finance the electrification of the Minneapolis Street Railway and the St. Paul Street Railway Companies, the rail companies merged on June 3, 1891, becoming the Twin City Rapid Transit Company.¹⁶ Thomas Lowry became the President of the TCRT and from this point onward, few events in the history of the Twin Cities can compare to the significance of the electrification of the street

¹² Amy M. Lucas, “Determination of Eligibility Study: East Side Station, Minneapolis Street Railway Company, 315 First Avenue N.E., Minneapolis, MN 2013, 21-22.

¹³ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 73.

¹⁴ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 5.

¹⁵ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 23-27.

¹⁶ Amy M. Lucas, “Determination of Eligibility Study: East Side Station, Minneapolis Street Railway Company, 315 First Avenue N.E., Minneapolis, MN 2013, 14.

railway system and its effects on the growth and development of the urban region.¹⁷ His vision and the street railway system resulted in land use that was zoned and planned. Residential neighborhoods could be located near the city's parks and lakes and industry could be near the river and railroad. Unlike the freeways which destroyed vibrant parts of the urban fabric, the streetcar was an integral part of the urban geography that connected neighborhoods by gathering diverse groups of people for a common journey, each on their own separate errands.¹⁸

When Lowry died in 1909, his brother-in-law, business partner, and TCRT's general manager, Calvin Goodrich, succeeded him as president. Upon Goodrich's death in 1915, Lowry's son, Horace became president.¹⁹

The subject property may also be eligible for designation as a landmark under the other five designation criteria. Such an analysis would be conducted as part of a designation study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development for the Certificate of Appropriateness:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt staff findings and approve the nomination of North Side Station as a landmark; establish interim protection; and direct the Planning Director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study.

ATTACHMENTS

N / A

¹⁷ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 36

¹⁸ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 177.

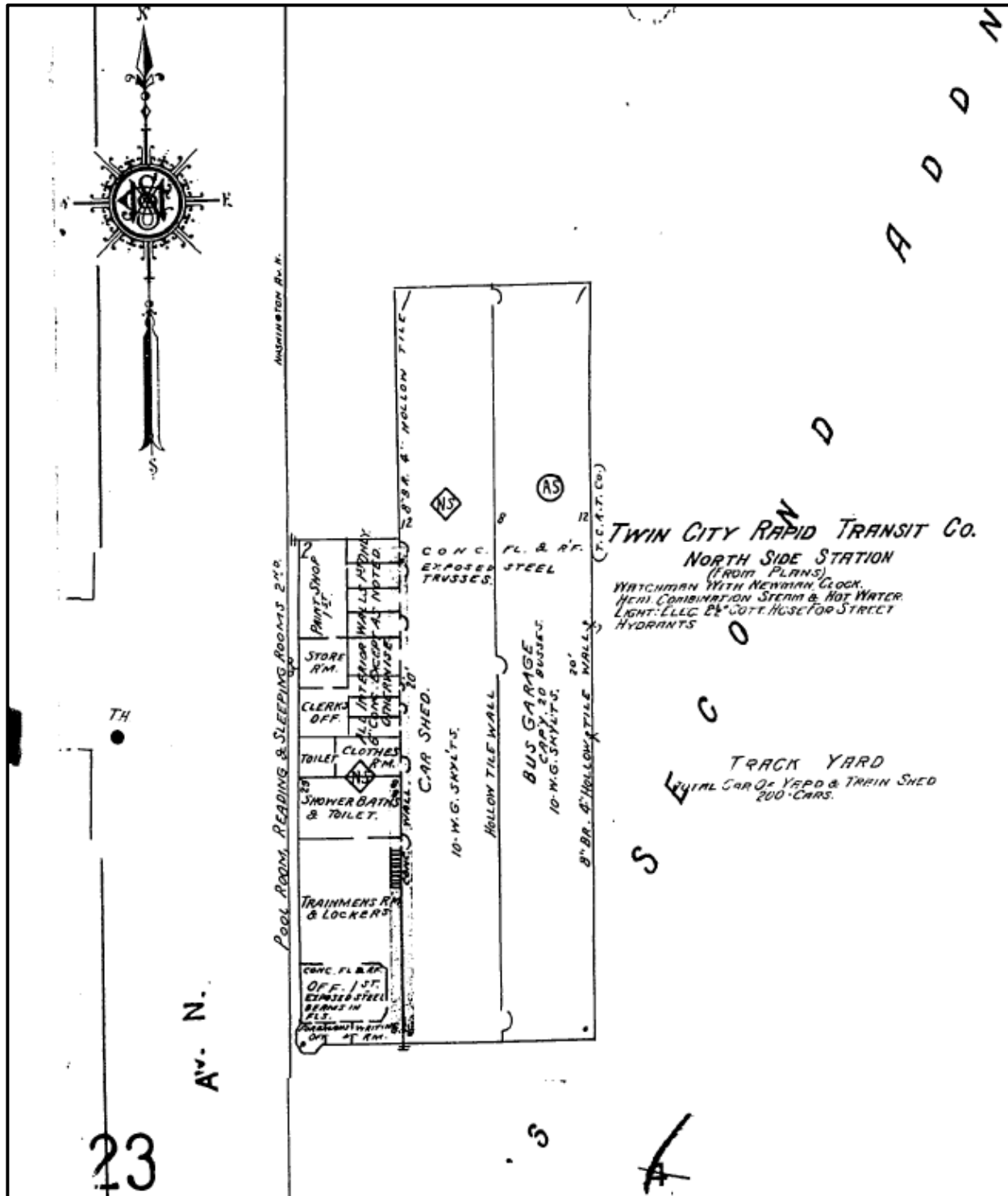
¹⁹ John Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007), 99.



2418 Washington Avenue North and vicinity, looking north, source: MinneAtlas



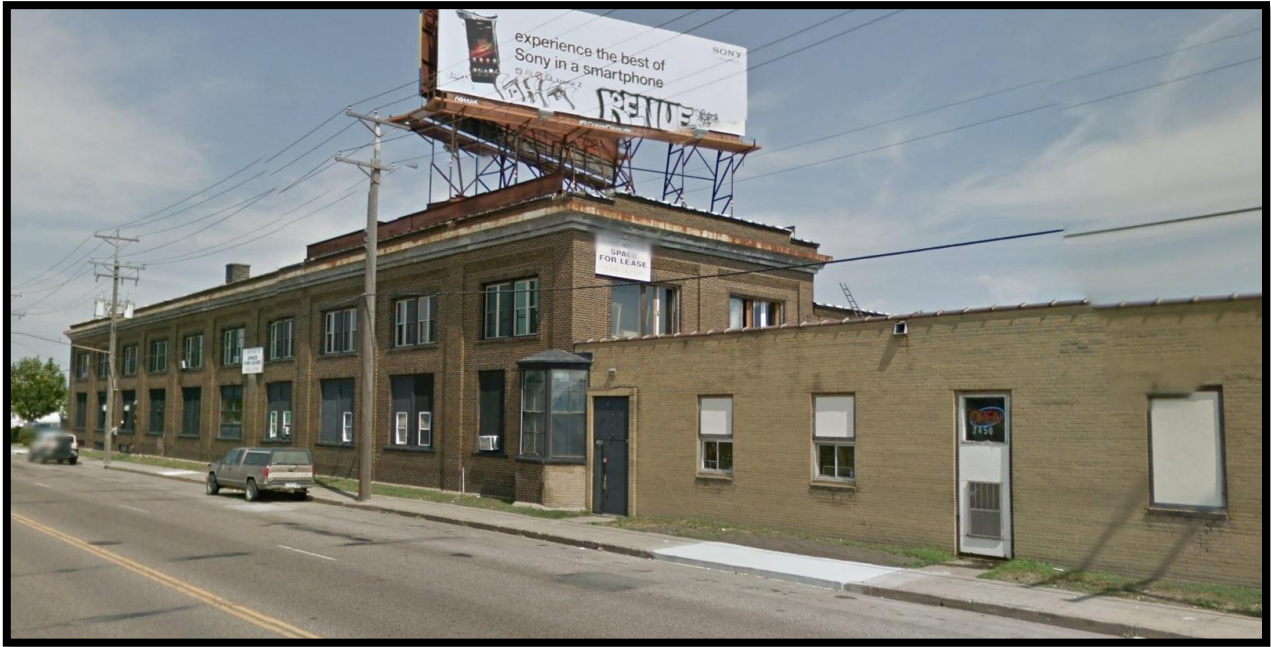
Northside station and surroundings, source: Google Maps



North Side Station, 1912- December 1951, vol. I, 1912-April 1951, sheet 24, Sanborn Map, source: Hennepin County Library



View of North Side Station from the southwest, 1922, source: Minnesota Streetcar Museum



Top - view of North Side Station from the southwest, 2013. Bottom – view of North Side Station from the northwest, 2013, source: Google Maps